

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY FARE IN BANG CHAN

261 As we turn to a detailed description of the family fare,  
701 we should like to point out that starvation was unknown in  
Bang Chan. Although much room remains for improvement in  
731 diet, "hollow hunger" was uncommon. In the few times when  
disastrous flood destroyed the year's crop, the government  
was able to provide enough rice so that it need not be rationed.  
133 People still ate their fill. Even floods had their  
286 advantage: one could fish out the window. That gross caloric  
undernutrition was rare was borne out by examination of the  
146 school children (Hauck, 1956). "On the average . . . Bang  
145 Chan children could not be considered as markedly under-  
weight. Few were so thin that one could 'count their ribs'  
and still fewer would be considered plump by American  
141 standards." In a random sample of village households that  
included about 10% of the population, the heaviest man  
weighed 69 kg. (151.8 pounds) and the heaviest woman 70 kg.  
(154 pounds). We noted no more than half a dozen adults who  
appeared to be "overweight." Most were middle aged or older,  
and none of them did strenuous field work.

Sources of Food

Home Production, Storage and Preservation

242 Rice. - Rice is an essential part of any Thai meal.  
The majority of the rice farmers in Bang Chan had rice for  
home consumption milled for them at Minburi. In general,  
256 they took their own paddy to the mill, and brought the re-  
sulting milled rice home, where it was stored in a box or  
mat-bin. Although, according to a recent survey (Goldsen and  
Ralls, 1957) nearly a third of the households owned a home  
rice mill, undermilled or home-pounded rice was not widely  
used in Bang Chan. Information on this point was obtained  
126 for 333 of 336 "kitchen-unit" households in the village. Of  
these 5 consumed home-milled rice only, 51 used home-milled  
rice in major part, 78 in minor part, and 199 not at all.

221 In households where home-milled rice was used, during  
256 June enough would be pounded to last until harvest, at which  
time hands were sore and bleeding from the field work and  
home pounding was impossible. At the time when data for the  
505 present report were being gathered, most families took paddy  
256 to the mill when water in the canal was high enough so that  
it could be transported by boat. If a farmer on a subsidiary

1293 1. In some large houses, two related family groups  
lived together but maintained separate kitchens.

423 from Bang Chan, the figure is as high as 85 percent (Dobby 1950). In  
184 these terms, therefore, it is best to view the incidence of land tenancy in  
Bang Chan as largely a function of local, historical circumstances.

369 A final word should be said about Bang Chan's proximity and ac-  
179 cessibility to Bangkok—the cornucopia of so much that is new, interesting,  
and desirable (if somewhat equivocally) to most Siamese peasants. It is  
clear that Bang Chan's closeness to the capital creates certain conditions  
that would not be present in a community situated, for example, 200  
kilometers, instead of 31 kilometers, from the nation's largest city. Simply  
on practical grounds, this nearness to the city permits the villagers to take  
advantage of opportunities—economic, recreational, and religious—which  
those living in distant provinces can obtain only after serious consideration  
of the financial and psychological expenses involved: "Do I have shoes to  
wear in the city? Do they treat people from the provinces well? With whom  
will I stay? Do I have the train fare?" A Bang Chaner who visits the capital  
(494) does not have to make such financial or emotional commitments, since it is  
only a one hour, three and one-half baht (seventeen and one-half cents)  
bus ride back home, although many do share with their up-country cousins  
the peasant's apprehensions about city manners.

The attractions of Bangkok take several forms: off-season jobs, medical  
care, kinship ties, special schools, great market places, famed monasteries or  
fairs, and the many other places where one can go to have fun. A survey  
(484) conducted in Bang Chan during 1955 (Goldsen and Ralis 1957) indicates  
that 62 percent of all household heads in the village visited Bangkok more  
than twice during the year for just such purposes. (Twenty-one percent  
had not gone to Bangkok at all, and 23 percent had gone more than ten  
times.) Many villagers, particularly younger men, attracted by the promise  
369 of regular wages, lighter work, and the bright lights of the city, leave Bang  
179 Chan with the hope that they will never have to return, although of course  
169 many do. The Goldsen-Ralis survey reveals that 26 percent of their re-  
(484) spondents had lived in Bangkok for a year or more, although for most this  
• (701) was in fulfillment of military service.

369 Living in Bangkok is not something that is desired in and of itself. Bang  
179 Chaners are keenly aware of the disadvantages of city living—particularly  
181 its great expense and insecurity—and are impressed only by those indi-  
viduals who have made a success out of their urban sojourn. Most would  
agree that a Bangkok coolie, for all his exposure to the wonders of the  
modern world, lives a considerably less attractive life than they do.

369 The frequent transit between Bang Chan and Bangkok,<sup>5</sup> however,  
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(207) <sup>5</sup> Of less practical consequence than their direct personal experiences and word-  
(204) of-mouth contacts, but not to be ignored, are the villagers' contacts with Bangkok by  
(871) way of radio, newspapers, books, and of course by way of what their children bring

Contacts Outside the Community

Radio and movies provide indirect contact between the community and the outside world and seem to encourage the acceptance of urban behavior patterns. (See Table 16.) In addition, however, there is direct contact between the community and the capital city. The inhabitants commute to Bangkok to sell their products or to visit. Some go to the city to live for a time, to attend the city's schools, to work as laborers or to serve in the military or police force. For example, about a quarter of the sample (26 per cent) reported that during the year preceding the survey they had been to Bangkok ten or more times. About a third of the sample (35 per cent) have lived in Bangkok, mostly for the purpose of working there. On the other hand, almost half the sample (45 per cent) have never been to the Don Muang Airport; and over two-thirds (69 per cent) have never been to the Annual Agricultural Fair.

One would expect that such direct exposure to the urban life and values of the capital city, for example, might be linked with greater readiness to try out improved methods of agriculture either because exposure to urban life may mean exposure to more information, or, less directly, may mean exposure to the urban values of economic self-advancement and experimentation. And there is, indeed, a relationship between exposure to the capital city and use of the motor. The two factors are not linked for all the residents--the relationship is a conditional one. That is, it is mainly among illiterate farmers where urban contact is associated with readier acceptance of the motor.

TABLE 19. ILLITERATE FARMERS\* WHO HAVE GREATER CONTACT WITH THE CITY ARE MORE LIKELY THAN OTHERS TO USE THE MOTOR

"This past year, how many times did you go to Bangkok...?"

| <u>Literacy</u> | <u>Never or once</u>                  |      | <u>Twice or more</u> |      |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|------|----------------------|------|
|                 | (Proportion who own or use the motor) |      |                      |      |
| Illiterate      | 44%                                   | (40) | 38%                  | (31) |
| Literate        | 83                                    | (36) | 88                   | (83) |

\* Male farmers only

In the same way, there is a similar conditional link between use of the motor and wider contacts beyond the horizons of Bang Chan. Visits to the airport and to the agricultural fair, for example, (both centers of contact with urban culture) are associated with use of the motor among illiterate farmers. If the farmer can read and write, on the other hand, he is just

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